



Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



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Summer 2014



Group News

As you will have gathered, the planned May visit to Appleby Castle had to be cancelled due to reasons beyond our control. But I'm now pleased to be able to say that we've managed to organise a new date - Tuesday 12th August. Booking arrangements are as before. Please see back page for contact details.

We've also finalised arrangements for our trip to Hartlepool in September. Details and a booking-form are enclosed with this newsletter.

Our next Summer Walk will be an evening visit to Askham Fell with Martin Railton on June 11th. We went here some years ago and found there was a lot to take in. Martin knows the area really well so this is a great opportunity to see this fascinating prehistoric landscape through the eyes of an expert.

On Sunday 22nd June, Harry Hawkins will be taking us around Shap Abbey and the surrounding monastic landscape. Again you'll be in the hands of someone who has been researching his subject for many years and knows the area inside out.

Sadly, plans for further work on Brackenber Moor this summer have had to be put on hold due to funding difficulties. Your committee has been discussing the situation and has got some interesting ideas but, as yet, no firm plans. We'll be in touch again once the situation is clarified. We still hope to be able to organise some form of practical archaeology for you this summer.

Finally, you may have gathered that our last meeting in the Supper Room (Dot Boughton's excellent talk on the Silverdale Hoard) may have been just that - our last meeting in the Supper Room! We've decided that for next year's Evening Lectures we'll switch to the Meeting Room at Centre 67. This is situated alongside the car park in Chapel Street so should prove very convenient. There's a map on the website and I'll provide more details in the next newsletter.

Best wishes, Martin Joyce

Darkest Perthshire

At the end of a long, lonely track at the end of a long, lonely road in darkest Perthshire lies a strange structure called the ***Tigh nam Bodach*** (the House of the Old Men). It's said to be a Celtic shrine - and, intriguingly, it appears still to be in active use!

I paid a visit last month - it took me over two hours of rough walking, but it was well-worth it. The Tigh is in a lonely but spectacular position up a side-valley at the head of Glen Lyon, surrounded by high, craggy mountains. It was an enjoyable walk, and also one which has given me something to think about.

The current Tigh takes the form of a small drystone structure, about a metre feet high and roofed with turf. It's roughly spade-shaped with a curved western end and a planar eastern face - the whole thing being about three metres long and two metres wide.



Tigh nam Bodach - an active Celtic shrine?

The Tigh has "inhabitants" - a family of vaguely humanoid stones. There's the *bodach* himself, about half a metre tall with a strange ET-like head, his wife, the *cailleach*, shorter and dumpier, and then a whole family of *mic* and *nigheannan*, the children. At *Samhainn* (the Celtic Halloween), somebody puts the family away to spend the

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winter in the Taigh. At *Bealltainn* (Mayday) they're brought out again to enjoy the sunshine.

On the day I arrived there was no sign of the family apart from some bare patches on the "courtyard" at the blunt end of the Tigh. Then I realised that it was still a day or so to Beltane. After removing a small stone from the front of the Tigh I found I could use my head-torch to peer in. Sure enough, there they were – inside - **walled** inside! They gave me quite a turn, I can tell you.



Tigh nam Bodach in summer, with its inhabitants outside and enjoying the sunshine!

Just how much of this is a wind-up is something I'm still trying to decide. The Tigh is shown on the modern OS map at NN380427, or thereabouts. However it's absent from the OS LV SW 6inch map rev 1898. Searches on the internet reveal websites which talk of the goddess Cailleach (the side-valley containing the Tigh is situated in *Gleann Cailliche* – the Glen of the Old Woman) and a legend in which the Cailleach offers protection to the local inhabitants in return for shelter. Folklore archivists are said to have recorded this story back in the 60s, but I've not been able to track these references down.

Significantly, there's been a lot of hydro development in the area and a cynic might wonder if the whole thing isn't just an elaborate hoax designed to discourage developers. If so, however, someone has gone to a tremendous amount of trouble. The Tigh is beautifully constructed and lovingly cared for. I noted that the family was lying on a bed of straw! Also, in the heather a few metres away I could pick out the foundations of a much more ancient structure, a tiny shieling but this time one big enough to accommodate human inhabitants.

Makes you wonder!

Martin Joyce

Prehistoric features on Fylingdales Moor, North Yorkshire - Moorland surveys and the parallels with Cumbria.

Appleby Archaeology welcomed Blaise Vyner, a consultant archaeologist to their March meeting. His talk concentrated on the prehistoric features on Fylingdales Moor, North Yorkshire a location familiar to many present.

Fylingdales moor is unusual in that the heather moorland extends to the coast - elsewhere on the North York Moors the coastal land is now in agricultural use. It was known that concealed under the heather there was a variety of archaeological features including rock art and burial mounds. Some of these features had been examined in the past but not recorded and many had proved impossible to relocate because of the vegetation.

The wildfire of autumn 2003 was to change that. Two and a half square kilometres of moorland were burnt. The intense heat destroyed the blanket of peat which had formed after the area was abandoned by farmers around 1000BC and exposed hundreds archaeological sites not previously recorded. It was vital to preserve these sites which were now susceptible to erosion and to restore the ecology of the moor. The immediate actions were to record the archaeology and regenerate the vegetation by reseeding the area with a mixture of heather and rye grass.

A walk-over survey combined with aerial photography of the area was undertaken. GPS and digital photography were used and a computer data base was established and this was augmented by a detailed field survey of a sample area with laser scanning of some of the decorated stones. Cut heather brash was then spread over major monuments and other steps were taken to prevent damage from the weather. English Heritage produced a report in 2004. Many prehistoric features were identified including rock art, standing stones, rectangular cairns, enclosures, burial mounds as well as more recent evidence of alum works and military activity.

A few months after the fire the most important feature on the moor was discovered - now referred to as the Stoupe Brow Monument. It was first observed as a single decorated stone protruding from the ground. Disturbance of the stone by a visitor who proceeded to excavate before alerting the National Park and English Heritage led to pressure to excavate and protect the stone. The stone was found to be part of a curved monument and had an entire side covered in geometric designs. It may have been broken and reset in this ring of stones. Only a segment of the 8 metre diameter monument was excavated and other stones decorated with cup marks were found. Cup marks and cup and ring marks predominate in the rock art on the

moor. The vegetation has now regenerated and the monument, now carefully recorded, is protected once more.

Field work continued and from 2007 and 2013 certain features were examined in more detail. Blaise spoke in detail about two of these:

A number of gullied features were identified, characterised by a shallow gully, around 0.35 to 0.40 metres wide, enclosing a sub-rectangular area ranging in size from 2 metres square to 8 metres by 4 metres. Some contained stones and a tiny piece of Iron Age pottery was found in one. Similar structures are found in north Wales and one was identified on Brackenber in 2011. Their interpretation is uncertain but it is probable that they were foundation trenches for structures.

Over a hundred little cairns 2-3 metres in diameter were found and a number were examined in detail. Many had been carefully constructed, though details varied considerably. Some had stone kerbs and a few contained worked flints of the Early Bronze Age (EBA). Several cairns were carbon dated to the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) but otherwise contained nothing of significance. The interpretation was that the EBA cairns were ritual and the MBA ones were agricultural.

An attempt was made to establish a chronology of the rock art. Rock art was seen in the stones of cairns where it appeared that the pieces might have been smashed off larger monuments and dragged to the cairn. This suggested that the decorated rocks were of significance to those who built the monuments and that they were probably EBA. Earth-fast rock art with a wide variety of motifs may be Neolithic and portable rock art mainly of cup marks is probably EBA.

The follow-up fieldwork also tried to establish the environmental history of the moor but there were gaps. Nothing is known of the Neolithic and EBA environment or the period from the Romans to the 18th century. In the MBA it was partly wooded and in the Iron Age there was heather bracken and scrub. By the 18th century there was extensive ash and alder woodland and by the 20th century there was extensive heather.

The fieldwork since the fire has enabled the principal periods of activity on the moor to be identified. There is some evidence of Neolithic activity in the rock art and possible cairns and enclosures and much more of the Early and Middle Bronze Age activity. Iron Age round houses and rectangular structures are seen but then there is a gap until the 18th century alum works and water features and more recently game management, quarrying, military activity and rubbish dumping. From the iron age onwards animals were grazed, peat was dug and turf was cut on the moor.

Blaise concluded his beautifully illustrated talk by mentioning that patterns of prehistoric monuments appeared to lie on a south- north axis on both the east and west of the region and that there was no evidence of monuments between North Yorkshire and Cumbria on an east and west axis.

Phyl Rouston

The Furness and Silverdale Viking hoards

On 8 April, the Appleby Archaeology Group was delighted to welcome back Dot Boughton, Lancashire and Cumbria Portable Antiquities Scheme Liaison Officer, to talk about recent finds from Lancashire and Cumbria.

Under the current law, finds belong to the finder unless they are legally defined as treasure trove, but the importance of recording them is increasingly being recognised both by the government and by the general public. The Scheme's success can be seen from the number of objects reported; in February 2012 the PAS database included 500,000 separate objects; by 2014 that number had increased to over 1,000,000. The huge numbers and wide variety of objects mean that, in future, only items earlier than 1700 AD will be recorded. Since 1996, the Treasure Act rules governing ownership and reporting of finds have been changed: any object over 300 years old and containing over 10% of gold or silver must be reported within 14 days. Under these rules, the Crosby Garrett helmet was not treasure, and was therefore not reported.

The Furness Hoard was found in May 2011 and consists of 79 silver coins (including two Arabic dirhams), a silver bracelet, a silver brooch and various smaller pieces of silver.



The Furness Hoard

Dated to around 955-965AD, it is of particular interest because it is a very late hoard and, unusually, the items are comparable to Viking material from the Atlantic seaboard, especially the Isle of Man and Scotland rather than the more familiar eastern material from York. The Furness hoard can be seen at the Dock Museum at Barrow-in-Furness.

The so-called Silverdale Hoard (actually found at Yelland) is somewhat larger and more impressive. Found in September 2011, it comprises 200 silver objects, including a large number of coins (of which four are Arabic dirhams, one being from Tashkent), five big bracelets or torcs, finger ingots, pieces of harness, pins, brooches and smaller pieces. Some exceptionally rare coins from the reigns of Athelwold (900-902AD) and Harthacanute (895-905AD) were identified, and an unusual nest of three bracelets, notable for their Viking Irish, Scandinavian and Merovingian design, some with inlay. Remarkably, all the items were buried inside an inverted lead container, the only one ever found in the UK, and therefore of great interest and value in spite of its quite humble material. After an initial period on display at the Lancaster City Museum, the Silverdale Hoard is now housed at the Museum of Lancashire at Preston.



The Silverdale Hoard

While the two hoards are perhaps not quite as impressive as the huge Cuerdale Hoard of 8,600 items, found by workmen on the banks of the River Ribble near Preston on 15 May 1841 and the largest Viking silver hoard ever found outside Russia, the Furness and Silverdale finds are still very significant – Dot has had to wait years for a major find in Cumbria, then two came along within a twelve-month!

Dot was thanked very warmly for a fascinating and inspiring talk.

Stephen Walker

Summer Events

Evening Walk to Prehistoric Monuments on Askham Fell:

Wednesday 11th June : Meet 7.00pm

Organiser : Martin Railton 07976530306

We will be visiting the Cockpit Stone Circle and Bronze Age funerary monuments with fine views over Ullswater. Dogs welcome under control.

Directions: From Askham Village take the road south to Helton. Keep right into Helton Village.

Keep right in the village and take the fell road.

Shortly after entering the open moorland there is a parking place on the right. Park on the roadside near the Copstone at NY 4960 2170

A guided tour of Shap Abbey and its environs

Sunday 22nd June at 1.00pm

Organiser : Harry Hawkins. Meet at the Abbey gates

Visit to Appleby Castle

Tuesday 12th Aug at 6.30pm

Enquiries to Phyl Rouston on 017683 53463 or at phyl@rouston.plus.com

Bus Trip to Hartlepool

Saturday 20th Sept

Organiser : Richard Stevens. See enclosed booking form for details

